

CHILD CARE: WHAT TO EXPECT DURING COVID-19

Now, more than ever, families and child care programs are doing their best to protect themselves, their families, and their communities from illness. Because of this, it is important that families like you know what to expect when sending your child to child care. **Use this information as a guide to help you understand best practices and have conversations surrounding new health and safety measures with your current or prospective child care program.**

These recommendations are based on information from the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services and the Center for Disease Control.

Talk with your child care program about the steps they are taking to maintain a healthy and safe environment. These may include:

- Dividing children into smaller group sizes, with the same group of children and same child care educators each day.
- Keeping groups of children separate and closing or modifying the use of communal spaces such as gyms, outdoor play areas, music or art rooms, etc.
- Not sharing toys or equipment between classrooms and disinfecting between uses.
- Implementing extra daily cleaning practices, including frequently disinfecting high-touched surfaces, including door handles, light switches, faucets, handles, and toilet seats.
- Not allowing children to bring toys from home and using only toys that can be easily sanitized.
- Suspending program tours or parents from walking their children to and from the classroom or care areas.
- Only using cleaning products when children are not nearby, allowing for adequate ventilation when cleaning, and ensuring those products are properly stored away from children after use.



WAYS YOU CAN HELP SUPPORT A SAFE AND HEALTHY CHILD CARE EXPERIENCE:

- Provide the program with up-to-date contact information of where you can be reached while your child is in care as well as other emergency contact information.
- Keep open communication with your child care program.
- Be understanding that programs may need to use stricter guidelines concerning children's health.
- Continue to maintain social distancing and use proper health and hygiene practices outside of the child care setting.
- While a program may not require face masks to be worn while at the facility, if the staff or family choose to wear a mask, be sure to review CDC guidelines for proper use. For safety concerns, children under 2 years old should not wear a face mask.

Discuss what the expectations will be to monitor and help protect the health and well-being of children and staff. Some recommendations are:

- Staff and children wash their hands upon arrival and at regular intervals throughout the day.
- Families are aware of program's sick policy and are prepared to keep children home if it is determined they are not well enough to be in care.
- Programs have policies in place if a child begins to show symptoms of illness. It is recommended that children are isolated in a room or in a designated area in a corner of a classroom from others until they can be picked up. Programs contact family immediately and child is picked up as soon as possible.
- If your child is at a higher risk due to underlying health conditions, discuss this with the child care program and keep your child home if there is community spread.
- Programs use age-appropriate ways to talk with children about COVID-19, social distancing, and proper health and hygiene practices.
- Staff are provided with additional training and support on infection control, cleaning and disinfecting, and are monitored for symptoms.
- Program has policies and procedures in place if a child or staff member is diagnosed with COVID-19.

If you have an infant or toddler in child care, also be sure to consider how caregiving practices will be implemented.

- Staff change their own clothes and the child's clothes if clothing comes in contact with bodily fluids. Soiled clothing is placed directly in a washing machine or a plastic bag.
- Staff washes hands before and after diapering and feeding a child, even if they were wearing gloves.
- Cloth diapers will not be rinsed in the facility and will instead be sent home to be cleaned.
- Infants and toddlers should still be held and comforted as usual throughout the day. Caregivers may wear a smock, apron, or large button-down shirt to protect themselves with long hair worn up.

How might daily routines and activities change?

Drop off and pick up

- May occur curbside or in the lobby, with a designated staff member escorting children to their classroom.
- It is recommended that the same person picks up and drops off children each day. Those that are at higher risk for severe illness should avoid pick up or drop off, if possible.
- If required to sign into an attendance system, families may be encouraged to use a smart phone app or other process.
- Staff may take children's temperatures upon arrival.
- Families may be asked if anyone in the home is showing any symptoms of illness or had contact with someone who was symptomatic or diagnosed with COVID-19.

Meal time

- Staff plates each child's meal and children do not serve themselves.
- Cafeterias are closed and food is provided in each individual classroom.

Nap time

- All nap mats, cribs, or cots are spaced out as much as possible, ideally 6 feet.
- Bedding is not to be shared between children and is kept separate when stored. Only machine washable bedding is used.

Play time

- Staff are conscious of toys that are more likely to be put in a child's mouth such as play food and utensils. Contaminated toys are immediately placed in a bin for cleaning.
- All field trips are suspended.

Outside time

- Classrooms maintain a staggered schedule for playground use.

Find more information at:

DHSS: <https://health.mo.gov/safety/childcare/pdf/faqs-child-care-re-opening-after-covid.pdf>

CDC: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/guidance-for-childcare.html>